DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 396 372 EA 027 592

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TITLE A Study of the Effectiveness of an In-School Suspension.
PUB DATE Mar 96
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the National Dropout Prevention Network Conference (Tampa, FL, March 24-26, 1996).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Discipline Policy; *Discipline Problems; High Schools; *In School Suspension; Program Effectiveness; Student Attitudes; Student Behavior; Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that evaluated the effectiveness of an in-school suspension program (ISSP) at a suburban Atlanta high school. Data were derived from a questionnaire that explored staff's and students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the ISSP. Responses were received from 70 staff members and 190 students. Fifty percent of the students reported that they preferred out-of-school suspension to in-school suspension, and 60 percent preferred in-school suspension to detention. Seventy percent of the students perceived the ISSP as punitive and 70 percent of staff did not believe that participation in the ISSP improved students' attitudes. Findings indicate that the program was not as effective as it could have been and would be more effective if: (1) the administration and ISSP director played a stronger leadership role; (2) the entire faculty increased their support of the ISSP and were more involved in the program's operation; and (3) communication between the ISSP director and faculty improved regarding students' assignments, behavior, progress, and return to the classroom. Eight figures are included. Appendices contain copies of surveys. (Contains 24 references.) (LMI)

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION PROGRAM

Statement of the Problem:

The in-school suspension program is a widely accepted disciplinary practice as many schools attempt to cope with an increasing number of disciplinary problems. The effectiveness of this practice in a suburban Atlanta High School as perceived by staff and students needed to be examined in order to determine if an improvement in the in-school suspension program was necessary.

Procedures:

Staff and student perceptions of the effectiveness of the in-school suspension (ISSP) were collected through the use of questionnaires. A separate questionnaire was developed for staff and students. Each questionnaire consisted of 15 items. The reliability coefficient for the student and staff questionnaires, using test retest procedures, was .94 and .97 respectively. Seventy (70) staff members and 109 randomly selected students from grades 9-12 were involved in the study.

The questionnaires for students differed from the questionnaire for staff. The student questionnaire dealt with students' contact with, perceptions of, and feelings about the ISSP. The staff questionnaire measured faculty perceptions about the quality, effectiveness, and philosophical orientation of the in-school program.

Analysis

Descriptive techniques were used to describe the data. The percentage of agree and disagree responses to the survey items was graphed and interpreted.

Results

One of the major discoveries of the study was that 50% of the students preferred out of school suspension to in-school suspension (ISS), and 60 % preferred ISS to detention. This suggests that the severity of the punishment was in reverse order, and that if a student preferred out of school suspension to detention or ISS to detention, the first step(s) should be eliminated. Students (70%) perceived the ISSP as punitive, and staff (70%) did not believe students returned to class with an improved attitude.

The authors concluded that the ISSP was not as effective as it could be and would be more effective if the following occurred:

- the administration and ISS director took a stronger leadership role;
- the entire faculty increased their support of the ISSP and were more involved in the operation of the program; and
- communication between the ISS director and the faculty improved regarding students' assignments, behavior, progress, and return to the classroom.

A STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION PROGRAM

Introduction

The public outcry for stricter discipline in the schools has caused many school systems to implement in-school suspension programs (ISS) as an alternative approach to out of school suspension (0SS). OSS "is likely to increase discipline problems because of the frustrating effect of the returning student finding him or herself even further behind than when he or she was evicted from school" (Patterson, 1985, p. 97). According to Hochman and Worner (1987), "Out of school suspension does little for students' educational achievement or their problem-solving skills" (p. 93).

Being suspended from school is a drastic measure for disciplinary problems. It removes the student from school and labels him/her in an educational setting.

> "School suspensions also convey a strong message of personal and institutional rejection and frustration. . . . Suspension conveys a confusing message about education and its importance. . . . The schools convey the message that a few days lost here and there to suspension for minor misbehavior is not really that important" (Williams, 1992, P. 9).

Patterson (1985) stated that OSS "is likely to increase discipline problems because of the frustrating effect of the returning student finding him or herself even further behind than when he or she was evicted from school" (p. 97). By causing the student to miss class and instruction, the school is setting them up for failure and more negative behaviors. To avoid this potentially detrimental situation, an alternative to past practice was needed.

An in-school suspension (ISS) program is seen by many school officials as an option before resorting to OSS. Sullivan (1989) wrote: "In slightly more than a decade, in school suspension (ISS) has gained widespread acceptance as a common method of discipline in public schools across the United States" (p. 32). He further stated that in-school suspension seems to meet the demands of educators and parents for effective discipline. Haupt (1987), in her research with 345 schools, found that ISS programs were effective in providing classroom atmospheres conducive to learning, in meeting the individual needs of disruptive students, and in reducing the number of discipline problems and expulsions. This research was supported by the work of Bridges and Keith (1994). They found it to be an effective means of preventing fighting, extortion and physical threats. Other research by Maatusiak (1993), however, found that its effect on repeat referrals was questionable, and further that it had no impact on academic success. Since there is some conflicting evidence on the effect of ISS programs, school officials questioned the effectiveness of the ISS program at their school felt a need to investigate.

Purpose of the study

The ISS program in a suburban Atlanta high school as perceived by staff and students needed to be examined to determine its effectiveness. A secondary purpose was to determine if an improvement in the in-school suspension (ISS) program was necessary.

Justification of the Study

The ISS program is thought to be effective in curbing disruptive behaviors. However, there is little data to support this opinion. Hopefully, the data gathered by this research will allow officials to find out the effectiveness of the ISS program and provide some insight into ways to improve it.

Questions that guide the study

1. Does the faculty view the ISS program as an effective means of discipline?
2. What are faculty perceptions of the purposes of the ISS program?
3. Does the faculty perceive the ISS director to be qualified to conduct the ISS program?
4. Does the ISS director effectively communicate student progress to the regular classroom teacher?
5. What do the students perceive the purpose of the ISS program to be?
6. Is ISS more effective than alternative discipline measures?
7. Is the ISS director viewed as humanistic and helpful to the student? population?
8. Does the environment in the ISS setting promote the completion of academic assignments by the students?
9. What percentage of the student population has been in contact with the ISS program?

Definitions of terms

1. In-school suspension (ISS) = an alternative form of discipline in which the student is isolated from school activities, but is given the privilege of maintaining classroom assignments.
2. Out of school suspension (OSS) = a form of discipline in which the student is banned from school with resultant loss in academic course credit.
3. Effective = positive faculty responses to six items on a questionnaire which deal with the term effectiveness, e.g., the ISS program is an effective method for dealing with discipline problems.

Review of Literature

The literature review covers three main components that produced positive effects on ISS programs. These three components are the following: 1) a sound behaviorally defined set of goals; 2) faculty involvement and staffing of the ISS; and 3) follow-up practices by the personnel involved.

The Goals of ISS

Educational practices need to be supported by a clearly defined philosophical construct. A system-wide approach may bring continuity to programs. Mizell (1978) believed that "School officials who are developing in-school alternatives to suspension should make sure their efforts are based on a solid philosophical foundation" (p. 215). Mizell also believed that the purposes of such a program should include the following: 1) helping the child; 2) identifying and remedying root problems; 3) helping students develop self-discipline; 4) understanding the factors that contribute to discipline problems in order to prevent future problems; 5) eliminating out of school suspensions; and 6) providing a framework for the faculty to achieve the first five goals. (p.216) These aspects should be included in the development of an ISS program.

The research of Opumi (1991) examined an ISS program which provided instructional and counseling support. The goals of the program were to improve students' attitudes, study skills, and behaviors through motivational techniques. The program was found to be partially successful.

Part of the attraction of ISS program is that the student can maintain academic progress. The role of the ISS director should be to remediate academic deficits and continue the instruction missed in the classroom. A program of this type was described by Rentz (1991). The goals of the program were to improve student behavior, attendance, morale, self-esteem, and academic achievement. The results included positive changes in each of the five goals and teacher feedback on the program was favorable.

Sullivan (1989) studied the effectiveness of ISS programs and outlined thirteen essential elements for success. They included the following: 1) research existing programs; 2) include a wide spectrum of staff members for positive acceptance; 3) provide adequate financial support for a full time position; 4) provide remedial treatment for underlying problems; 5) have clearly defined measurable objectives; 6) use only for specified offenses; 7) provide a full-time, qualified, trained staff; 8) establish a standardized, frequently monitored record keeping system; 9) establish rules and procedures for ISS that are clearly defined; 10) allow students to complete regular class assignments for credit without academic penalty; 11) offer extensive, individualized counseling; 12) monitor students through follow-up strategies; and 13)

regular program monitoring and ongoing evaluation are extremely vital for success.

Sullivan (1989) further stated that there were three objectives for professionals to follow: 1) identify areas for improvement, i.e., attendance, number of OSS's, recidivism rate, discipline referrals, academic achievement, negative attitudes toward school; 2) formulate measurable objectives based upon your goals; and 3) set a definite time frame in which to accomplish the objectives. These should be kept in mind during the formation of a program.

One element that should be included in any effective ISS model is a rehabilitative approach. Purely punitive measures serve only to punish and not to improve student behavior. Siskind (1993) found that most ISS programs are more punitive than therapeutic and counseling is not used systematically. ISS program should have a therapeutic component to address negative attitudes and behavior. Hochman and Worner (1987) described a group counseling model that proved effective with at-risk students. This intervention included counseling aimed at improving students' self-esteem, awareness of negative attitudes and behaviors, setting personal goals and improving problem-solving skills. Goals included reducing truancy, increasing attendance, raising grade point averages and improving behavior.

Faculty Involvement and Staffing the ISS Program

The second component of an effective ISS program is the selection of personnel to staff the program. However, proper staffing alone will not result in an effective program. "Total dedication and commitment to the philosophy of the in school suspension program from all levels of the administrative and teaching staff is a mandatory requirement for the effectiveness of any program" (Mendez and Sanders, 1981, p. 69). The research of Haupt (1987) in 345 schools in Pennsylvania also supports this premise. She stated that in addition to administrative support and clearly defined rules and regulations, the cooperation of the staff is a needed factor for an effective ISS program.

Once the administrative staff establishes goals and implements the practical aspects involved such as: room, referral process, needed forms, etc., then the procedures must be explained in a faculty meeting. Such positive involvement is vital to a smooth flowing effective intervention. Corbett (1981) stated that if principals want to ensure fidelity between what is intended and what actually occurs, four issues need to be resolved: 1) involvement of faculty, ISS teachers and aides; 2) training programs for everyone involved; 3) visibility and availability of the ISS program and personnel; and 4) efficient distribution of information regarding ISS. (p.59) Involvement of the staff in the planning of the ISS program might ensure their acceptance and cooperation. Corbett suggested that administrators seldom see goals carried out to their true intent when implemented by someone else. Inclusion of the staff may be the best insurance for success.

The referral process is also a form of communication that is vital to an effective intervention. All members of the staff should have the option to refer students for misbehavior. Garibaldi (1979) described the referrals as "made by the classroom teacher or teachers, by the school or area counselor, by the school administrator, by health personnel, by attendance personnel or by parents" (p. 80). If all personnel have access to the program, then they will more likely to cooperate when their assistance is needed. In the program run by Garibaldi, five ingredients for success were outlined. They were the following: 1) administrative involvement, interest and support; 2) an excellent teacher; 3) faculty support; 4) a team approach; and 5) respect for the student. (p. 81) All these elements contribute to correct student misbehavior.

The teacher in charge of the ISS process is the main proponent of the school's goals for in-school intervention. Some qualities to seek in such a director were described by Sullivan (1989) as a full time teacher with the qualifications including the following:

> 1) Experience in a related field such as counseling, social work or special education; 2) strong disciplinary and classroom management skills; 3) an interest and desire to work with academically and behavioral troubled students; 4) the ability to relate to pupils in an empathetic, respectful and consistent manner; 5) knowledge regarding test administration and interpretation; 6) instructional skills in general academic areas; 7) competence in communicating findings to parents, teachers and counselors; 8) a willingness to seek out a variety of appropriate resources and act as a referral agent; and 9) proficiency in providing a positive atmosphere that is conducive to learning (p. 36).

It takes a gifted and dedicated professional to develop the necessary skills to make an ISS program work effectively in a public school setting.

In the selection of an ISS director, some systems make the mistake of using the position as a dumping ground for an undesirable teacher. This would counteract any positive learning atmosphere. Mendez and Sanders (1981) describe the negative attributes of this practice in a secondary setting. The teacher would feel as if they were stuck in this class and the students would pick up on the negative feelings. Transference of negative attitudes would hinder correction of discipline problems.

Mizell (1978) suggested the following necessary traits for ISS personnel: "a desire to work with troubled students; a previous demonstration of success with similar problems; an ability to relate to students from a variety of class and cultural orientations; an interest in seeking the root of problems and not just misbehavior symptoms; and patience, caring and commitment to students" (p. 220).

Dedication and a willingness to work with troubled youth are necessary qualities. This philosophy was emphasized in a study by Frith, Lindsey, & Sasser (1980) in describing an effective ISS program as "success can be traced directly to the determination of the professionals and parents who have been committed to improving student behavior" (p. 638). Motivating all those involved is the role ascribed to the administrator in charge of the program.

Follow-up Procedures

Every educational program must change with the times and the clients. An intervention may work one time and be totally inappropriate with students the following year. Therefore, for the ISS program to be effective, it must be measured against the progress of the students presently referred to the program. An ongoing follow-up procedure must be followed and adapted as needed. Accuracy in reporting student progress is essential. Sullivan (1989) stated that "the existence of standardized, frequently monitored record-keeping systems significantly contribute to the effectiveness of the evaluation design" (p. 34). Several different forms should be examined and tested to find the one that conveys the necessary information.

Faculty involvement is a vital part of any successful behavioral intervention. In the follow-up phase, this daily interaction becomes critical to the evaluation process. Any changes in behavior can usually be seen in the classroom and reported to the ISS staff. Short (1988) believes that "it will be critical for faculty to have a mechanism for receiving feedback on the program. Principals should secure faculty involvement in the evaluation of the program and follow-up changes" (p. 21). Short also suggested the formation of an advisory group of faculty members to encourage more involvement.

In the evaluation, Short (1988) said the data to be collected might include - teacher perceptions, recidivism, types of referrals, contract completion, teacher and student attitudes and parental attitudes toward the program. These should be kept in mind when developing the instruments to use in a survey of those involved. These could be used after the student leaves the ISS program. Such a system was described by Mizell (1978).

> One component of this follow-up should be to determine how successful the in-school alternative has been in helping solve the root problems of the student's misbehavior. One approach is to use a form or card that enables each teacher who sees the student throughout the course of the normal school day to indicate how the student is getting along in class. This is turned in to a school administrator, with a copy to the alternative program staff, at the end of each school day (p. 223).

Some type of written feedback needs to be required of the regular classroom teacher where the misbehavior originated. Some things that need to be identified according to Mizell (1978) are the following: a significant reduction in the out of school suspension rate; the nature of future referrals; an increase in academic, social and attendance problems; greater student self-discipline; more parental involvement; involvement of a broad range of students; and the excessive use of this deterrent to make it ineffective. Each of these topics need to be addressed for effective follow-up procedures.

Student progression toward stated, specific goals can be assessed through many different methods. One such instrument was developed by Disciullo (1984) for a middle school program in New York. His procedure includes: 1) academic progress, 2) social progress, 3) behavioral progress, 4) parental response, 5) teacher response, 6) administrative response, 7) statistical recording, and 8) recommendations" (p. 330). These follow-up procedures could bring positive results in correcting misbehavior.

On a statistical level, one can display overall effectiveness through the school system's record-keeping. Administrators are responsible for keeping up with discipline reports and the numbers that evolve from their misbehavior. Williams (1992) stated that "alternatives can be evaluated in terms of a decrease in both the total number of suspensions imposed and the days of instructional time lost" (p. 14). While an empirical evaluation might prove valuable on an administrative level, it may be more important to examine the incidence of root behaviors referred by the total staff. These may be reflected in the data from the main office, but the picture of improvement would be unclear.

While studying an alternative program at a high school in Wisconsin, Pare (1983) found that all the teachers in the school were aware of the ISS program and all of them had first-hand experience with the referral of students. However, there was a gap between knowledge of the program and complying with its demands. He stated that "although teachers philosophically supported disciplinary action short of suspension (94 percent), the follow-through responsibilities required by the program were not met by many teachers" (p. 65). The difference between how a teacher feels about a program and their willingness to fully participate is a problem that happens in many educational endeavors. To encourage teachers, the principal needs to take the lead in enforcing necessary full participation.

This point of view is shared by Mizell (1978) who generalized this situation to all of education. "It is now a truism in American education that the quality of any given program is largely dependent upon the commitment of those who plan the program and the leadership and energy they bring to its implementation" (p. 225). This appears to be a key component of a successful ISS program.

An ISS program can be effective in curbing misbehavior in a public school. However, misbehavior is a complex problem with many human ramifications. Short (1988) suggested that this intervention "is not a panacea; but yet another strategy. But when it is well planned, goal oriented, and incorporated and implemented in a school wide discipline approach, it offers a viable approach to managing student behavior problems" (p. 32). If the program is ineffective, the error is compounded.

A close look at the population of the ISS students would reveal its effectiveness. If the percentages remained the same across grade level, then the program might not be performing its intended function in the school. A study of this aspect of ISS was done by Johnston (1989) at a high school in North Carolina. They discovered that "as might be expected, more students came to ISS during their sophomore year than during later years" (p. 90). This is an indication that the program was effective.

To summarize the review, there is a need to have goals for the ISS program that do more than punish. There is a need to maintain academic progress while students are in the ISS program. Ideally, the ISS program will be therapeutic rather than purely punitive. The entire faculty should be involved in the program and the ISS director should be a gifted and dedicated teacher. Above all the ISS program should not be a dumping ground for an ineffective classroom teacher. Finally, an ISS program will not be effective that does not involve the staff in followup procedures when students return to the regular classroom.

Methodology

The purpose of this descriptive action research project was to find out the perceptions of the faculty, and students concerning the effectiveness of the ISS program. To evaluate these perceptions and attitudes, two questionnaires were developed for students, and faculty members.

Subjects

The high school involved in this study was located in a suburban area near Atlanta, Georgia. The socio-economic backgrounds of the students ranged from public housing to apartments to upper middle class houses. The school serves approximately 1400 students in grades 9 through 12. The student population was approximately 100% African American. The student questionnaire was administered to a random sample of the student population. This was achieved by randomly selecting one homeroom at each grade level to be surveyed. A total of 107 students was involved in the study with an equal proportion of males and females. The faculty population involved in the study consisted of 67 teachers.

Instrumentation

The faculty questionnaire was developed based on the questions which guided the study. It consisted of fifteen questions that measured the faculty's perception of ISS conditions, effectiveness, and philosophical orientation. (see Appendix A) The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement, with each statement based upon a five-point scale. To ensure consistency in the respondent's ratings, some statements, with similar concepts, were stated from opposite points of view.

The student questionnaire was also developed based on the questions which guided the study. The questionnaire consisted of fifteen questions that measured the student's contact with, perception of, and feelings about the ISS program. (see Appendix B)

Reliability for the faculty and student surveys was established through test-retest procedures. The Pearson correlation coefficient for both surveys showed strong reliability with values of .97 and .94 respectively. Content validity was established by having several experts in the area of student personnel and survey research critique the questionnaire.

Procedures

One homeroom at each grade level was randomly chosen by selecting homeroom teachers' names from the school directory. Randomness was achieved by selecting numbers from a random numbers table and matching the number with the teacher in the directory. Students were administered the survey during the thirty-minute homeroom period. The homeroom teachers were told to encourage students to be as truthful as a possible.

The faculty questionnaire was placed in the mailboxes of all sixty-seven members of the school faculty. They were asked to respond carefully to each question and return them anonymously. The questionnaires were analyzed and the scores were tabulated and graphed.

Follow-up procedures for the local ISS program were also studied for the purpose of providing appropriate feedback to the director, so that changes could be made to better help the students placed in the program.

Method of Analysis

The responses to each item were calculated and a percentage was assigned. These were grouped and graphed according to one of questions that guided the study. This allowed the results to be displayed in a clearer and more effective manner. For example, six questionnaire items dealt with the question "Does the faculty view the ISS program as an effective means of discipline?"

Limitations.

This study was conducted as part of an evaluation of one high school ISS program. The personal relationships of an extroverted ISS director, and the small percentage of respondents (24%) who had direct contact with the program could have affected the results. Ninety-six percent of the students, however, had indirect contact, i.e., they knew someone who had been in the ISS program.

Data Analysis

Faculty Data

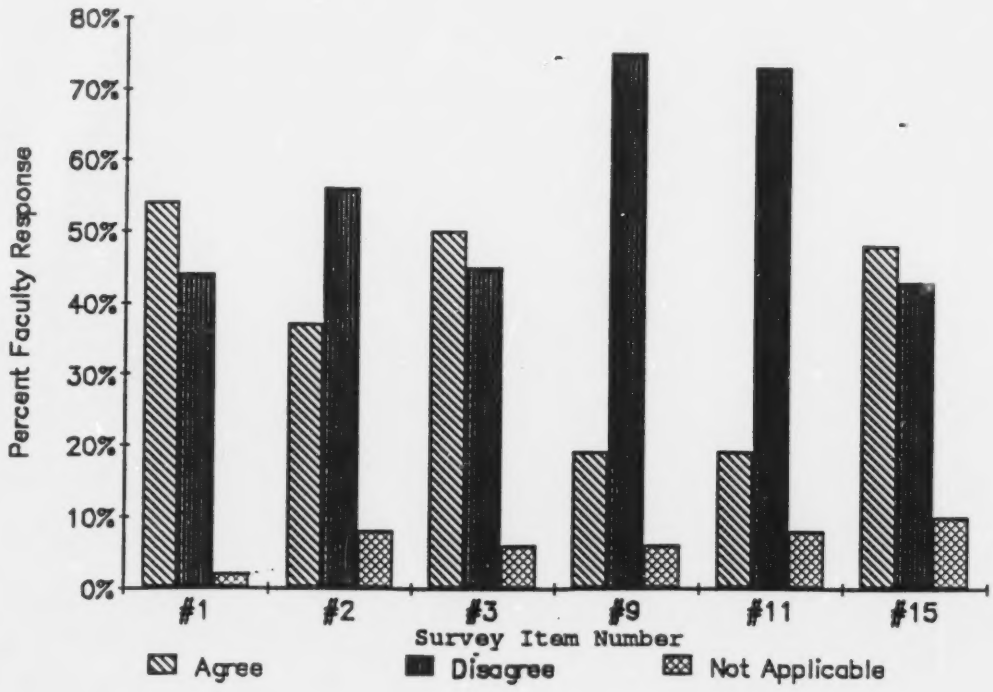
The responses to the faculty questionnaire will be analyzed first followed by an analysis of the responses to the student questionnaire. The first question to be addressed was "does the faculty view the ISS program as an effective means of discipline?" Items 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 15, were grouped together to address the degree of effectiveness. Faculty responses to these items reflected their feelings about the usefulness of the ISS program to control student misbehavior. (see figure # 1)

The results for item # 1 revealed that 54% of the faculty agreed that the ISS program is an effective method in dealing with discipline problems. Forty-four percent of the faculty disagreed with this statement and 2% found the question to be not applicable.

Item # 2 addressed the issue of whether students assigned to ISS are less likely to engage in disruptive behavior upon their return to the classroom. The faculty response was that 56% disagreed with this statement, 37% agreed with the statement, and 8% found the item to be not applicable.

Item # 3 addressed alternative discipline measures. There was no significant difference in the perception of ISS or after school detention as a deterrent to misbehavior. Half of the faculty agreed that ISS was more effective than detention, 45% disagreed, and 5% felt this item was not applicable to them.

Figure # 1. The Faculty's Perception of the Effectiveness of the ISS Program.



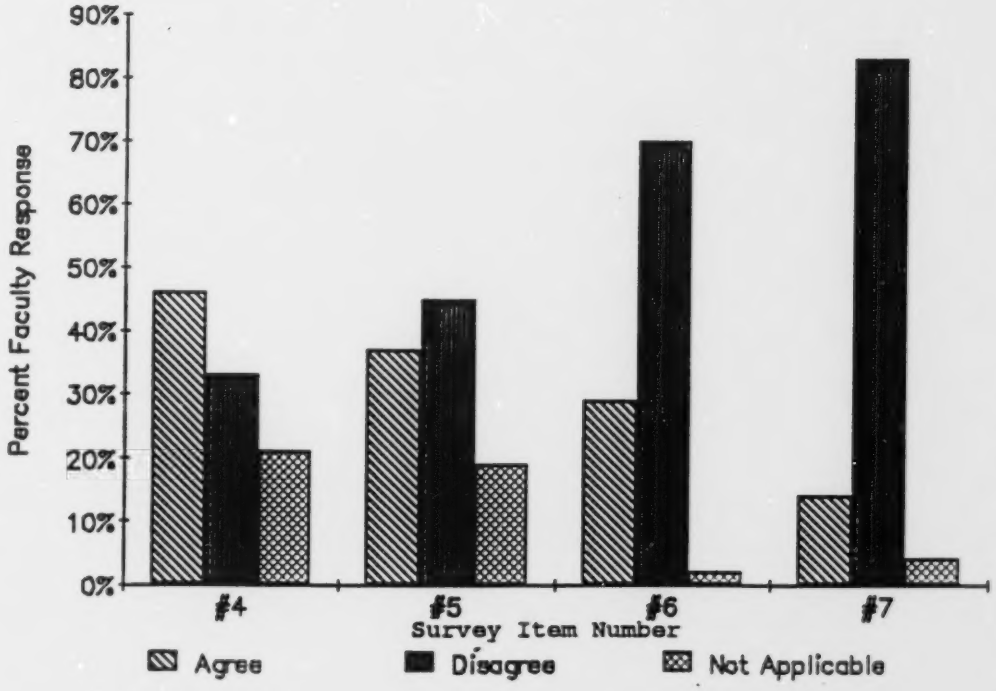
Seventy-five percent of the faculty felt that ISS was not a waste of time and money (item # 9). Nineteen percent of the faculty agreed with this statement and 6% found the statement to be not applicable.

Item # 11 focused on the improvement of student attitudes after returning from an ISS assignment. Seventy three percent of the staff felt that students who returned to their classroom after being placed in ISS did not display an improved attitude. Nineteen percent of the faculty agreed that students who returned to the classroom after serving ISS did show an improved attitude, and 8% found this item to be not applicable.

Item # 15 asked if the ISS program was effective? Forty-eight percent felt that the ISS program was effective; forty-three per cent did not view this program as being effective; and 9% found this issue to be not applicable.

Items 4, 5, 6, and 7, measured the question dealing with the faculty's perception of the purpose of the ISS program. These questions address the issues of academic assistance and counseling services provided to the students placed in ISS. (see Figure # 2)

Figure # 2. The Faculty's Perception of the Purposes of ISS.



Item # 4 asked if a student placed in ISS received academic counseling? The results suggest that the faculty did not perceive this to be occurring. Fifty-four percent either disagreed or found the question not to be applicable. Forty-six percent of the faculty agreed that academic assistance was given.

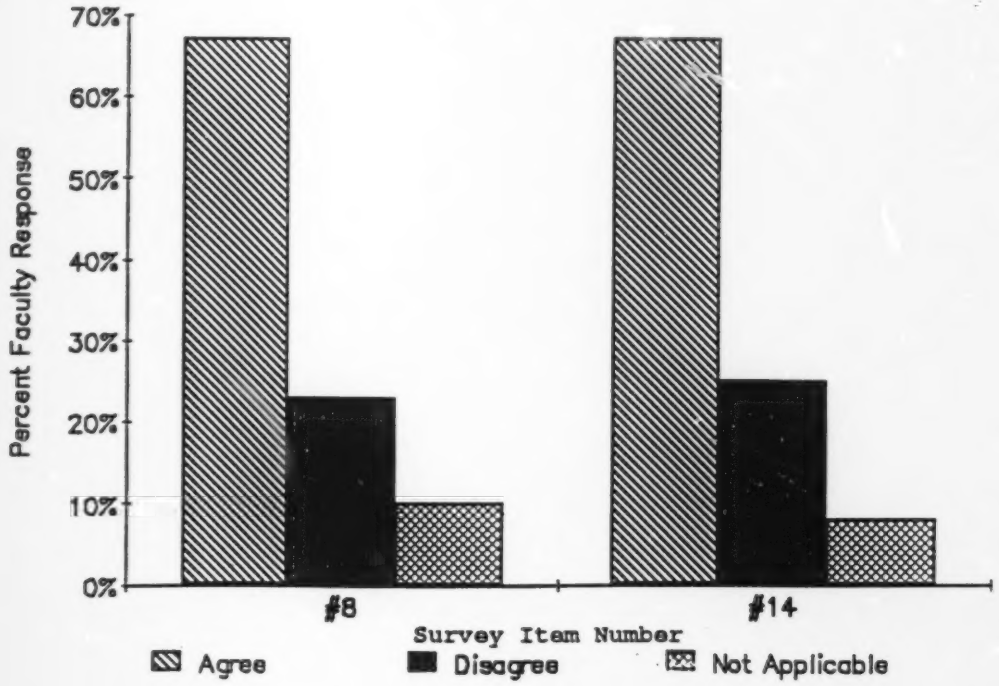
When questioned about students receiving counseling about their behavior problems while in the ISS setting, (Item # 5), 63 % of the faculty either disagreed or found the item to be not applicable. Thirty-seven percent of the faculty agreed with this goal of ISS. This strongly suggests that the faculty does not feel that students receive counseling while being detained in ISS.

Seventy percent of the faculty disagreed with item # 6 which asked if the main purpose of ISS was to punish students. Twenty-eight percent of the faculty agreed with this statement, and 1 % found the question to be not applicable. The faculty responses strongly suggest that the ISS program should not be punitive in nature.

However, when questioned about ISS and the role it should play in offering students academic assistance, (item # 7) especially if they are behind in their work, 83% of the faculty disagreed that this should be the purpose of ISS. Fourteen percent of the faculty agreed with this statement, and 4% found the question to be not applicable.

The next question dealt with the faculty's perceptions about the qualifications of the ISS director to conduct the ISS program. Questions # 8 and # 14 addressed this issue. (see Figure # 3)

Figure # 3. The Faculty's Perception of the ISS Director.

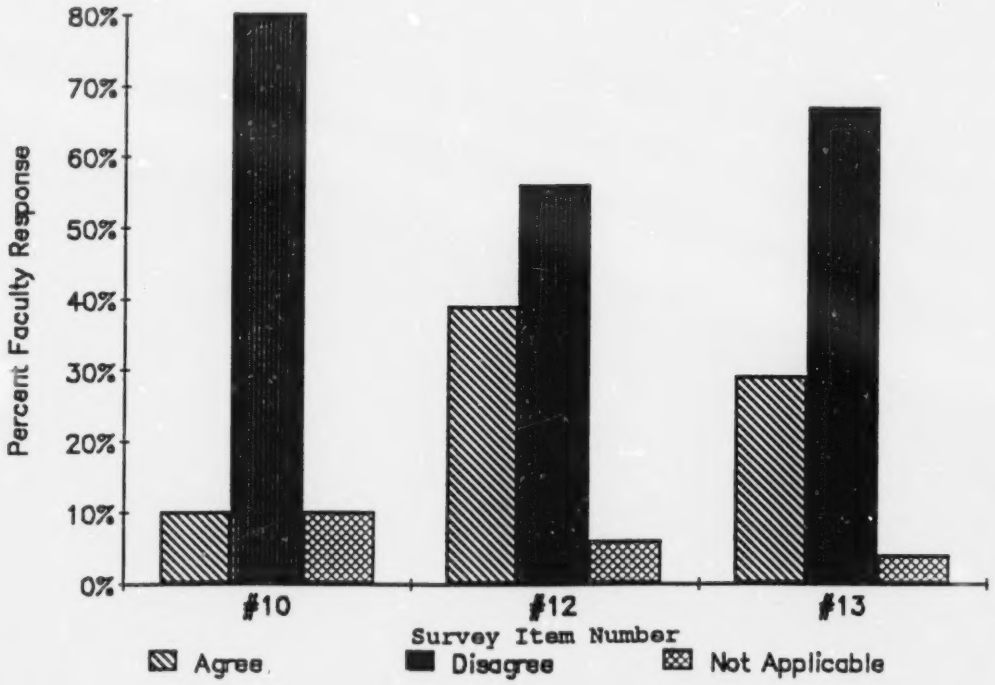


Sixty-seven percent of the faculty felt that a certified person should be in charge of ISS (Item # 8). Twenty-three percent of the faculty disagreed with this statement, and 10% percent of the faculty found the question to be not applicable.

Also, 67% of the faculty felt that the ISS director was qualified to conduct the program (Item # 14). Twenty-five percent of the faculty felt that the ISS director was not qualified, and 8% found the question to be not applicable.

The next question to be analyzed dealt with faculty perceptions of communication between the classroom teachers and the ISS director. Items # 10, # 12, and # 13 addressed this issue. (see Figure # 4)

Figure # 4. The Faculty's Perception of Communication Between the Classroom Teacher and the ISS Director.



The results from item # 10 showed that 80% of the faculty did not feel that they were informed about improvement in a student's behavior after placement in ISS. Ten percent of the faculty felt they were informed, and 10% found the item to be not applicable.

Communication of student's academic progress to the classroom teacher by the ISS director was also addressed in item # 12. Fifty-six percent of the faculty felt that the ISS director did not communicate student changes to them. Thirty-nine percent felt that communication about student progress did occur, and 6% found the item not applicable.

Also, 67% of the faculty did not discuss student assignments with the ISS director before or after placement in the program (item # 13). Twenty-nine percent agreed that the ISS director discusses assignments with them, and 4% found the item not applicable.

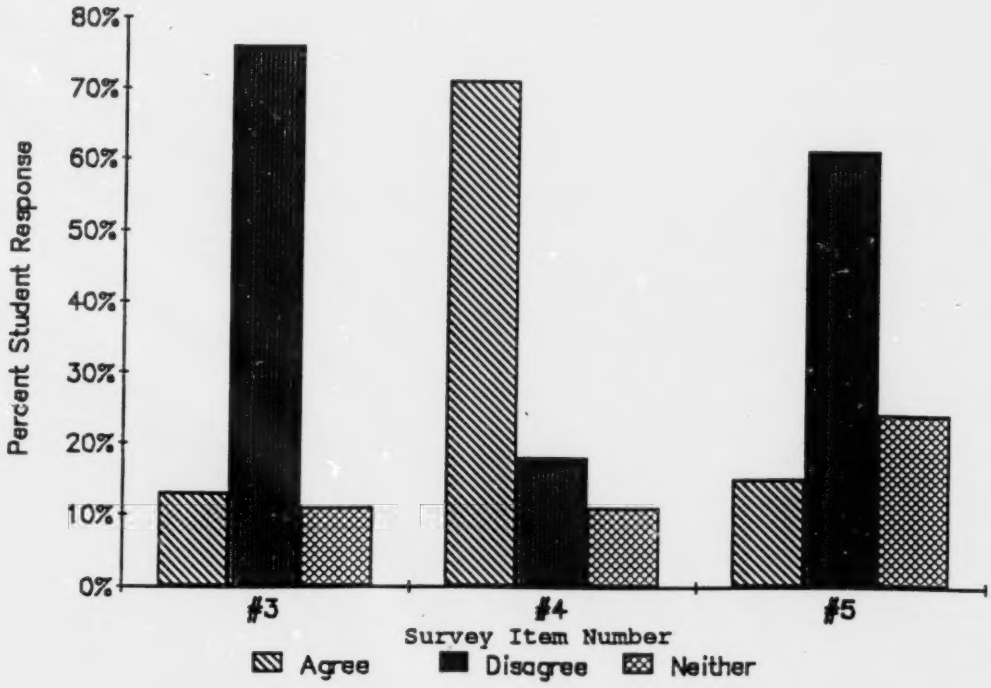
Student Data

Students were asked their individual perceptions of the ISS program as they related to the questions that guided the study. These questions concentrated on issues such as: contact with the ISS program, purpose of the program, alternative discipline measures, perceptions of the ISS director, and the ISS environment.

Items # 1, and # 2, addressed the issue of student contact with the ISS program (directly or indirectly). Item # 1 addressed how often the student had been assigned to ISS this year. Seventy-six percent of the students surveyed had not been assigned to ISS this year. Fourteen percent of the students had been assigned once this school year, 1% had been assigned twice, 4% had been assigned three times, 1% had been assigned five times, and 4% had been assigned six times.

Item # 2 asked whether or not the student knew someone who had been assigned to ISS this year. Ninety-one percent of the students agreed. Four percent of the students did not know anyone who had been assigned to ISS, and 6% of the students had no contact with the program.

Figure # 5. The Students' Perception of the Purpose of the ISS Program.

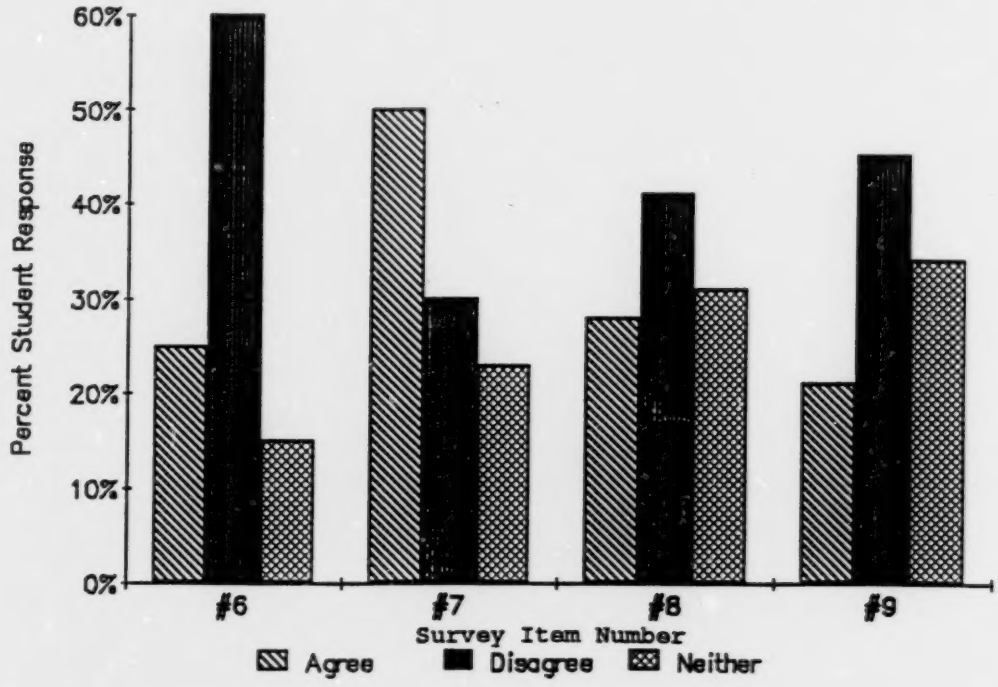


Items # 3, # 4, and # 5 dealt with the purpose of the ISS program. The purposes were divided into academic concentrations, punitive measures, and counseling. (see Figure # 5)

Students did not perceive the ISS program to be academic in nature (item #3). Seventy-six percent of the students disagreed that the purpose of ISS should be to help students keep up with their work. Thirteen percent of the students agreed that ISS should assist them in maintaining their work, and 11% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement. Seventy-one percent of the students surveyed felt that the main purpose of ISS was to punish students (item # 4). Eighteen percent disagreed with this notion, and 11% neither agreed or disagreed with this concept. Sixty-one percent of the sample did not feel the main purpose of ISS was to help students with their problems (item # 5). Fifteen percent agreed that ISS should help students with their problems, and 24% neither agreed or disagreed with this idea. The results suggest that the students do not feel counseling is a service offered through the ISS program. The results of the survey suggest that students perceive the ISS program to be punitive in nature.

Students were surveyed to find out the effectiveness of the ISS program in comparison to alternative discipline measures. Items # 6, # 7, # 8, and # 9 addressed this issue. (see Figure # 6)

Figure # 6. The Students' Perception of the Effectiveness of the ISS Program.

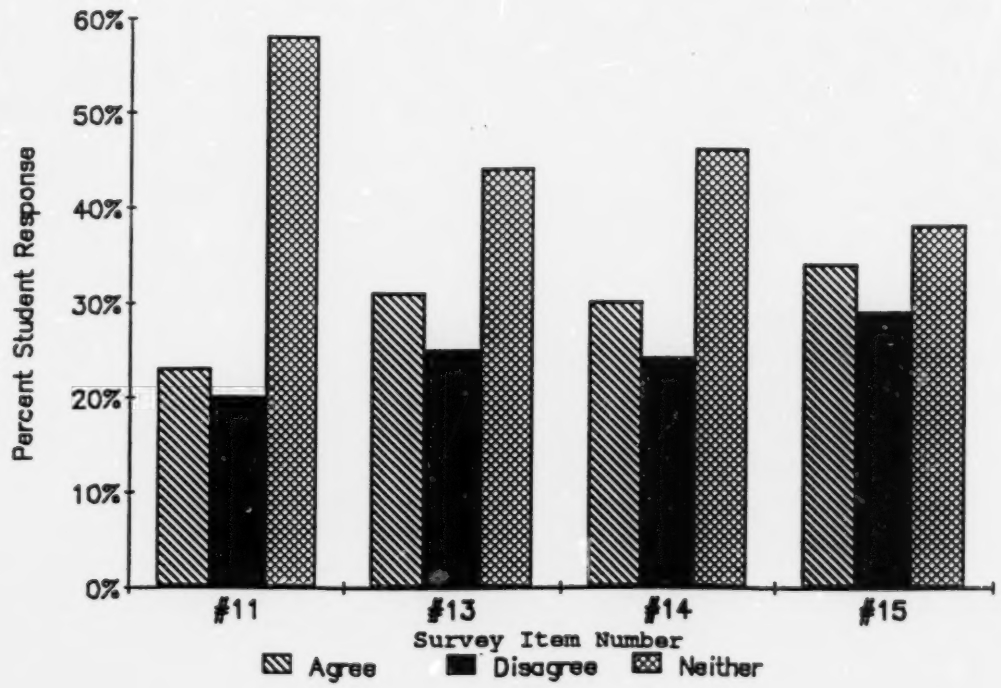


Sixty percent of the students preferred to be assigned to ISS instead of being assigned after school detention (item # 6). Twenty-five percent of the students agreed they would rather be assigned detention, and 15% neither agreed or disagreed with this statement. Item # 7 asked if students would rather be assigned OSS instead of ISS? Fifty percent of the students agreed that they would rather be assigned OSS, 30% disagreed, and 20% neither agreed or disagreed with this question.

Students were surveyed to determine if ISS served as a deterrent to disruptive behavior. Students were asked (item # 8), "If you knew that you were going to be assigned ISS for doing something, would you still go ahead and do it?" Forty-one percent of the students surveyed disagreed, 28% agreed, and 31% neither agreed or disagreed. Also, students were questioned concerning the notification of their parents if they were placed in ISS (item # 9). Twenty-one percent of the student population agreed that they would not want their parents to know, 45% disagreed, and 34% neither agreed nor disagreed.

The perceptions of the students toward the ISS director as being humanistic and helpful to them were also assessed. Questions 11, 13, 14, and 15 addressed these issues. (see Figure # 7)

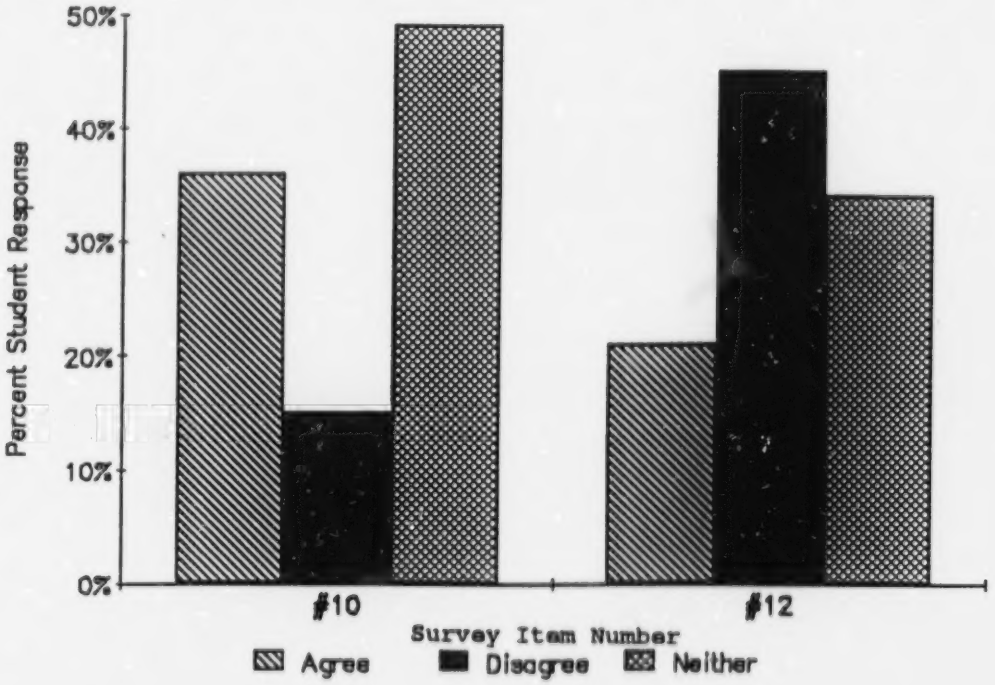
Figure # 7. The students' perceptions of the ISS director.



Item # 11 asked the students if they felt the ISS director asked their teachers about their behavior. Fifty-eight percent of the students neither agreed or disagreed, 23% agreed, and 19% disagreed. Students were asked if they felt the ISS director was helpful (item # 13). Thirty-one percent of the students surveyed agreed with this idea, 25% disagreed, and 44 % of the population neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. Item # 14 asked if is easy to talk to the ISS director. Thirty percent of the students agreed, 24% disagreed, and 46% of the students that responded neither agreed nor disagreed. Students were asked if the ISS director cares what happens to them (item # 15). Thirty-four percent agreed with this statement, 29% disagreed, and 38% neither agreed or disagreed.

Items # 10 and # 12 addressed the issue concerning whether the environment of the ISS program promoted completion of academic assignments. (see Figure # 8)

Figure # 8. The students' perception of the environment of the ISS program.



Students were asked if they felt the rules established in the ISS program were too strict (item # 10). Thirty-six of the students agreed with this statement, 15% disagreed, and 49% of the population neither agreed or disagreed. Item # 12 asked if the students felt their academic performance was enhanced by their completed work in ISS. Twenty-one percent agreed with this statement, 45% of the population disagreed, and 34% of the students neither agreed or disagreed with this statement.

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Discussion

Previous research and this study describe three necessary components of a successful ISS program. These will be reviewed in a logical, sequential order beginning with program goals, then leadership roles, and finally follow-up procedures.

Program Goals

In evaluating the goals for the ISS program, the questions in the survey dealt with the effectiveness and purposes of the program. The students' responses to the effectiveness of the ISS indicate that it is not very effective. For example, students chose ISS over after-school detention, and they would rather be sent home for OSS. While they did indicate a desire to keep their assignment to ISS from their parents, it appears that students do not seem to care whether they get sent to ISS. Also, 41% of the students felt that a referral to ISS would deter their misbehavior in the regular classroom. The data clearly shows that after school detention is a more punitive consequence than ISS or OSS.

Almost a third of the student respondents had no opinion on whether or not they would misbehave if they knew that they would be assigned to ISS. Perhaps, a lack of direct contact with being in ISS led to the assumption that it was not that bad. This may lead the student to testing the system in order to see the limitations of their own misbehavior. A clear, concise picture of the workings of the ISS program may need to be presented to the entire student body at the beginning of each school year. With a strong leader to promote the program, students will get a sense of the importance of ISS in the structure of the school day.

However. it is also possible that administrators are unwittingly creating a situation for students to disobey school rules. Clearly, if most students prefer OSS to ISS and ISS to detention, then students will not go to detention and will not go to ISS so they can be sent to OSS. Consequently, administrators have created a situation where students are invited not to go to detention or ISS. They can break the rules and settle for their preferred punishment, i.e., OSS.

There is a clear need to address this problem so students will obey the punishments they receive when they are sent to the office. Either let students chose the punishment they will obey, e.g., detention, ISS, or OSS, or increase their desire to follow the rules, not break them. A policy requiring them to fulfill all obligations they failed to perform prior to OSS might do the trick. For example, a student who failed to show up for detention; and then is punished with ISS; and then failed to show up for ISS only to be punished with OSS; should be required to report to ISS and detention on their return to school. Until they have met all of the obligations they failed to perform, they should not be allowed to return to the regular classroom.

The faculty responses were more evenly divided on the questions about effectiveness. Questions that dealt with effectiveness, repetition of misbehavior, alternatives to detention and overall effectiveness produced percentages of agreement and disagreement which offset any possible conclusions being drawn. They did agree that the program was not a waste of time and money. However, 70 % of the faculty felt that students returning to class after a stay in ISS did not show an improved attitude. The reasons for this lack of improvement could be attributed to many factors such as: a failure on the part of the ISS director to counsel students or personality conflicts, personal problems at home, etc., whose scope is beyond the range of this study.

Questions that were aimed directly at purposes of the program fell into three models: academic, therapeutic and punitive in nature. The students tended to disagree with the stated purpose of academic assistance and counseling for one's problems. Approximately 70% of the students felt that the program was punitive in nature. Regarding the academic aspect of the program, 83% of the staff felt that the main purpose should not be to remediate learning problems. Regarding the counseling component only 46% of the faculty felt that the director does some counseling with troubled students. Consequently, it appears that this program does not include a therapeutic component to deal with the root causes of the misbehavior. While there does appear to be somewhat of a counseling component, it is very weak as perceived by faculty.

When discussing ISS as a punitive measure, the staff believed the opposite of the students. Almost 70% disagreed with ISS as being a punitive measure while 71% of the students believed it was punitive in nature.

Leadership Roles

The second factor to be examined was the interaction and cooperation of the ISS director with other members of the staff. In the student survey, only 23% believed that the director talked to their teachers about their behavior. However, there did tend to be agreement that the director is very helpful, is easy to talk to, and cares about the students. Garibaldi (1979) and Sullivan (1989) stated that a respect for the student was a basic element. It seems that this concept is woven throughout the director's interactions with referred students. While structured counseling is not provided for in the curriculum of the ISS program, perhaps it is done informally.

Followup Procedures

The follow-up procedures are the last of the main points that needs to be addressed in order for an ISS program to be effective. Three questions on the faculty questionnaire dealt with this part of the study. The first dealt with communication among staff members. The data clearly shows that communication

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between the director and the faculty regarding improvements in students' behavior is inadequate. Teachers overwhelmingly disagreed (80%) with the existence of such discussions. Only 10% felt that follow-up information was provided by the director.

When student progress is broadened to include academic and also behavioral progress, then the picture gets a little better. In this case, almost 40% agreed that some communication took place. Still, almost 60% felt that no communication occurred. It seems that the student's assignments were discussed somewhat between the director and the regular teachers, but more could be done.

This communication about academics leads to the third survey question that targets the student's assignments after placement in ISS. Thirty percent agreed that feedback on work completion is done by the director. Again, almost 60% felt there was no follow-up regarding assignments. Overall, the data clearly shows that the teachers are not directly involved with students assigned to the program. If total faculty involvement is the desired goal, then input into the workings of the program seems vital. If Pare (1983) is correct in his assumption that all the teachers need to be aware of the program, which included first hand knowledge of daily workings, then some in-service or hands-on program needs to be provided to every teacher in the school. Administrative leadership and energy are a necessity in this matter.

Suggestions for Improving the ISS Program.

The first component of the ISS program is the referral process. In questions of due process, the student knows ahead of time the exact punishment for each behavioral infraction. At the time of ISS assignment, the student has a right to defend his or her actions. This makes the policy more viable in the school. However, more dissemination of information on these steps needs to be made to the staff and students.

The model for the ISS program needs to move from it's punitive nature to a more therapeutic model. A combination of an academic/therapeutic approach needs to be introduced in a more structured setting. This would prove to be more effective in eliminating student misbehavior. To accomplish this task, more qualified personnel should be added to the ISS staff (a counselor, a special educator or a social worker).

With added staff members, more individualized work can be done on root behavioral problems. Perhaps peer tutors could help students placed in an ISS environment. This would provide a wider attack on the academic reasons for school failure.

The counselors need to add this program to their already full schedule. As ISS students are at the center of the group that needs to be counseled at one point or another, time should be appropriated daily in which group counseling occurs. Improvement in student self-esteem and a knowledge of the root causes of

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misbehavior can only serve to lessen the incidence of student misbehavior.

Another aspect of an effective program is total dedication by all the teachers in the school. In-service workshops would inform the faculty about the program. Perhaps an advisory group or team should be formed to deal with every aspect of the intervention. Teachers from each content area could meet to make decisions about the program. Each teacher could then be responsible for the communication among department members.

Another method of program evaluation is through an examination of student disciplinary records. Recidivism rates might provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of the program. Surveys of these troubled students may also be more definitive in describing misbehavior and their consequences.

Another suggestion would be the use of student disciplinary cards for chronic disciplinary problems to keep up with their behavior. These cards would be circulated throughout the school day and handed into an administrator at the end of the day. The director would keep and store these cards in their files. Data from these cards could be compiled and a report could be provided to each of the student's teachers in order to monitor their behavior.

Overall, the leadership and energy of the administrators, involvement of the entire staff, and the ISS director will determine how effective a program operates. As with teaching, enthusiasm for the program will become contagious and a higher success rate will occur.

Conclusions

The results of this action research project lead to the following conclusions: 1) there is a need for stronger leadership role by both the administration and the ISS director; 2) the entire school staff must increase their support for the ISS program and be included in the decision making process; and 3) there is a need to establish viable follow-up procedures for continuous improvement of the program and for effective communication between the ISS director and the faculty.

A key finding of this research is that students prefer OSS to ISS and ISS to detention. The administration and faculty must come up with a policy which reverses this preference. Otherwise they are only creating a situation where students disobey decisions instead of obeying them. In short, they could be teaching students to ignore their decisions.

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Appendix A

Survey of Westlake Staff

Scale:
5 = Strongly Agree
4 = Agree
3 = Disagree
2 = Strongly Disagree
1 = Not Applicable

1. In-school suspension (ISS) is an effective method of solving discipline problems.

   5 4 3 2 1

2. Students assigned to ISS are less likely to engage in disruptive behavior after their return to the classroom.

   5 4 3 2 1

3. ISS is a more effective means of disciplining students than after school detention.

   5 4 3 2 1

4. Students placed in ISS receive academic assistance from the ISS director.
   5 4 3 2 1

5. Students placed in ISS receive counseling regarding their problems.

   5 4 3 2 1

6. The main purpose of ISS should be to punish students.

   5 4 3 2 1

7. The main purpose of ISS should be to help students with their acedemic classwork, especially if they are behind in class.

   5 4 3 2 1

8. A certified teacher should be in charge of ISS.

   5 4 3 2 1

9. ISS is a waste of the school's time and money.

5 4 3 2 1

10. Teachers who have referred students are informed about improvement in their behavior after placement in ISS.

5 4 3 2 1

11. Students who returned to class after time in ISS display an improved attitude.

5 4 3 2 1

12. The ISS teacher communicates student progress to the regular teacher.

5 4 3 2 1

13. Teachers and ISS staff discuss student assignments before and after placement in the program.

5 4 3 2 1

14. ISS staff is well qualified to conduct the program at Westlake.

5 4 3 2 1

15. Overall, the ISS program is effective at Westlake High School.

5 4 3 2 1

Appendix B

Student Survey

Please complete the following survey concerning In-school suspension (ISS). Circle the answer that you most agree with. Please answer all questions.

Scale:
1 = Agree
2 = Neither Agree or Disagree
3 = Disagree

1. I have been assigned to ISS _____ times this year.

2. I know someone who was been assigned to ISS this school year.
   1 2 3

3. -The main purpose of ISS is to help students keep up with their work.
   1 2 3

4. The main purpose of ISS is to punish students.
   1 2 3

5. The main purpose of ISS is to help students with their problems.
   1 2 3

6. I would rather be given ISS than detention.
   1 2 3

7. I would rather be given out of school suspension than ISS.
   1 2 3

8. If I knew I would be assigned to ISS for doing something I would still go ahead and do it.
   1 2 3

9. If I were assigned to ISS, I would not want my parents to know.
   1 2 3

10. The ISS rules are too strict.
    1 2 3

11. After being in ISS, the teacher asks my teachers about my behavior.
    1 2 3

12. My grades in my regular classes were helped by the work I did while in ISS.

1 2 3

13. The teacher in charge of ISS is very helpful.

1 2 3

14. The teacher in charge of ISS is easy to talk to.

1 2 3

15. The teacher in charge of ISS cares what happens to me.

1 2 3